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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000497

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
NSC FOR JWOOD  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CG CJTF-82, POLAD, JICCEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/26/2018  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: KARZAI-DOSTUM STANDOFF CONTINUES; KARZAI MESSAGE  
TO TURKEY: TAKE DOSTUM OR HE WILL BE ARRESTED

REF: KABUL 303

Classified By: DCM Christopher Dell for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

Summary  
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1. (C) Attorney General Sabit announced on February 18 that the government had suspended General Abdul Rashid Dostum from his government post and threatened to arrest him if he refused to cooperate with the investigation into the beating and abduction of Akbar Bay on February 2-3 (reftel). Neither Dostum nor the two others under investigation are in custody, but police surround his Kazbul residence and refuse to let Dostum leave. Dostum refuses to cooperate with the investigation and is using the media (including his own TV station) to make his case, but the North remains quiet. On Karzai, instructions, National Security Advisor Rassoul informed the Turkish Ambassador on February 24 that if Turkey does not take Dostum, Afghan authorities will arrest him. The standoff continues.

Attorney General Suspends Dostum, Threatens Arrest  
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2. (SBU) On February 18, Attorney General Sabit announced that the government had suspended General Abdul Rashid Dostum as Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Afghan Army pending his cooperation with the investigation into the February 2 abduction of his political rival Akbar Bay, and threatened to arrest him if he fails to cooperate (Ref). (The Attorney General insists that Dostum's position did not provide him immunity; his suspension was a political rebuke not a precondition for legal action.) Thus far, President Karzai has not confirmed publicly that Dostum no longer holds his position.

3. (SBU) Sabit also announced that Member of Parliament (and National Congress Party leader Abdul Latif Pedram and MP Mohammad Alem Sai (from Takhar), who were allegedly present during the February 2 incident, are also under investigation. The announcement advised them not to leave the country and warned them they will be arrested unless

they cooperate with the investigation. Parliament and media took issue with reports that Sabit had the authority to suspend the two from Parliament. (While the constitution is not explicit on this matter, we share the view that an attempt by a member of the executive to suspend a member of parliament would raise serious separation of powers issues.)

#### Dostum Resists

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¶4. (C) Dostum announced that he would resist any attempt to arrest him. Soon after Sabit's announcement on February 18, Dostum dispatched several of his private security guards to determine whether President Karzai was making plans to arrest him. The Ministry of Interior then dispatched police to determine what Dostum's men were up to. The "confrontation" was hyped by the media but in fact did not amount to much. It ended with the police being observed sitting in plastic chairs with their Kalashnikovs in front of Dostum's residence drinking tea served to them by Dostum's security guards. Dostum issued a message over his radio station calling for calm and requesting safe passage to the North. He remains in his Kabul residence. Neither Dostum nor the others involved in the February 2 incident are in custody.

¶5. (SBU) Akbar Bay has made several statements to media highly critical of Dostum in the wake of the February 2 incident. In a press conference on February 23, he claimed that if the government does not hold Dostum accountable for his actions, it would lose legitimacy. This sentiment is

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echoed by many Afghans. Dostum's television station, Aina TV, has been agitating for his cause and against the government on a variety of issues, such as the election law. The North remains quiet in the wake of the initial protests following the February 2 incident.

#### Karzai Presses Turkey to Take Dostum Off His Hands

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¶6. (C) In a meeting on February 24 with senior Afghan officials (including National Security Advisor Rassoul and Attorney General Sabit), where the Ambassador was present, Karzai instructed Rassoul to meet with the Turkish Ambassador that evening to relay the message that if Turkey did not take Dostum, Afghan authorities would move to arrest him. Karzai said he was prepared to risk the unrest in the North that Dostum threatened would follow any action against him. Karzai stated in that meeting that he believed Dostum is weaker than he claims (an assessment we share). We understand that Rassoul did convey the message to the Turkish Ambassador.

#### Attorney General Ready to Move Against Dostum

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¶7. (C) Sabit has shared privately that he would prefer to prosecute Dostum. He would settle for Dostum's flight as a fugitive from justice, but added that he anticipated Dostum would find a way to orchestrate a hero's departure. He also speculated that Dostum would find a way to return well before next year's elections. Sabit also expressed concern that failure to hold Dostum accountable under Afghan law would undermine both his own position as the nation's chief law enforcement officer and Afghans' belief in their government's support for the rule of law.

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